

Message Text

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ACTION EB-07

INFO OCT-01 EA-07 ISO-00 AGRE-00 CIAE-00 INR-07

NSAE-00 COME-00 STR-04 /026 W

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7873

INFO AMCONSUL HONG KONG

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DEPARTMENT PASS AGRICULTURE

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: EAGR CH

SUBJ: PRC CROP CONDITIONS

1. SUMMARY. WHEAT CROP SHOWED IMPROVEMENT FROM SOUTH TO NORTH, EVEN THOUGH DROUGHT MORE SERIOUS IN NORTH. DROUGHT DAMAGE IN SOUTH REFLECTED IN REDUCED TILLERING, THIN STALKS AND SMALL HEADS, WITH YIELDS BELOW POTENTIAL. OVERALL PROSPECTS GOOD, HOWEVER. (NOTE: DIFFICULT TO GENERALIZE ABOUT WHEAT PROSPECTS BECAUSE OF WIDE RANGE OF OBSERVATIONS AND VARIATION FROM FIELD TO FIELD, EVEN IN SAME AREA.) RICE TRANSPLANTING MOSTLY COMPLETED IN SOUTH; ONLY PARTIALLY SO (IN TANDEM WITH PROGRESS OF WHEAT HARVEST) IN CENTRAL CHINA; AND VERY LITTLE IN NORTH. OUTLOOK FOR EARLY RICE CROP APPEARS EXCELLENT AT THIS TIME. WATER NEARLY EVERYWHERE FROM CANTON TO PEKING APPEARED PLENTIFUL SO SPRING-PLANTED CROPS SHOULD BE OFF TO GOOD START. END SUMMARY

1. FOLLOWING ARE OBSERVATIONS BY HONG KONG CONGEN AG OFFICER DURING TRAVEL CANTON TO PEKING MAY 20-22, 1977.

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2. HONG KONG BORDER TO CANTON. RICE: GOOD TO EXCELLENT (MOSTLY EXCELLENT -- RICH, DARK GREEN); NEAR CANTON, SEVERAL FIELDS WITH DISCOLORED (YELLOW-BROWN) PATCHES. PLANTS 8-12 INCHES HIGH FOR MOST PART. PROBABLY 90-ODD PERCENT OF ALL FIELDS UNDER PADDY RICE. SUGAR CANE: SHOWED EFFECTS OF DRY WEATHER. SOIL VERY DRY. PLANTS GENERALLY THREE TO FOUR FEET HIGH, BUT AREAS OF

UNEVEN GROWTH OR BARE FIELD; MOST CANE DROOPING BADLY. WHERE PLANTED NEAR WATER, LOOKED MUCH BETTER. NO REALLY LARGE EXPANSES UNDER SUGAR CANE. CORN: NOT WIDESPREAD, MOSTLY INTERPLANTED AND CONDITION GENERALLY POOR. BARLEY: A FEW FIELDS ONLY, APPROXIMATELY TWO FEET HIGH, HEADED; FULL, EVEN GROWTH. (MOST WHEAT AND ABRLEY ALREADY HARVESTED.) WATER: ALTHOUGH CANE AND CORN AND UNIRRIGATED FIELDS GENERALLY DRY IN APPEARANCE, NO INDICATIONS OF ANY WATER SHORTAGE NOW; I.E., PADDIES ALL WELL SUPPLIED, WITH WATER EVIDENT IN IRRIGATION CHANNELS; LEVELS HIGH IN WATER HOLES AND PONDS; STREAMS WERE UP. SITUATION IMPROVED TOWARDS CANTON. OVERALL IMPRESSION THAT CURRENT WATER AVAILABILITY WAS EXCELLENT.

3. HENGYANG TO CH'ANGSHA (HUNAN): RICE: PADDY FIELDS UNDER WATER, PLANTS 8 TO 10 INCHES TALL NEAR HENGYANG, BECOMING PROGRESSIVELY SHORTER GOING NORTH WHERE JUST TRANSPLANTED. SOME RICE BEING TRANSPLANTED. WHEAT FIELDS INCREASINGLY FREQUENT. (THIS OBVIOUSLY TRANSITION ZONE TO BE PLANTED TO RICE AFTER WHEAT HARVESTED.) WHEAT. SOME WHEAT JUST HARVESTED OR BEING HARVESTED. SOME THRESHING IN PROGRESS. WHEAT IN IRRIGATED FIELDS OF EVEN HEIGHT (PERHAPS TWO TO TWO AND ONE-HALF FEET HIGH) BUT STALKS THIN, STANDS SPARSE (TILLERING POORLY DEVELOPED) AND HEADS SMALL. CONSIDERABLE AREA UNDER WHEAT ON HILLS BEHIND IRRIGATED FIELDS (SOME ON VERY STEEP SLOPES); MUCH TALLER THAN IRRIGATED WHEAT (APPEARED CLOSE TO THREE FEET HIGH), LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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BUT THIN STANDS, STALKS WEAK-LOOKING AND HEADS SMALL. PROBABLY NOT SUFFICIENTLY WATERED. YIELDS, EVEN IN IRRIGATED FIELDS, WILL BE REDUCED FROM POTENTIAL LEVELS. DIFFICULT ASSESS DEGREE WITHOUT COMPARISON WITH PREVIOUS YEARS; IT IS POSSIBLE THAT CONDITIONS ARE MORE OR LESS TYPICAL FOR THAT AREA.)

4. RAPE: A FEW FIELDS UNDER RAPE; SOME JUST HARVESTED AND BEING THRESHED. TOBACCO: SMALL FIELDS, LOOKED VERY GOOD. PLANTS ONE TO ONE AND ONE-HALF FEET TALL. WATER: ABUNDANCE OF WATER EVERYWHERE. SOME WHEAT HARVESTING IN WET-LOOKING FIELDS (PROBABLY RECENT RAINS).

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DEPARTMENT PASS AGRICULTURE

5. CH'ANGSHA (HUNAN) TO WUHAN (HUPEH). WHEAT: WIDE-
SPREAD HARVESTING NOTH OF CH'SANGSHA BUT DECREASING
NORTHWARD WHERE MOST WHEAT NOT YET READY FOR HARVESTING.
WHEAT PREDOMINANT CROP BUT AS HARVESTING IS
COMPLETED ON IRRIGATED FIELDS, PADDY WILL BECOME
PREDOMINANT. IRRIGATED WHEAT SHORT-STALKED VARIETIES,
UNIFORM DENSITY AND HEIGHT TWO FEET OR SO, BUT STALKS
APPEARED GENERALLY THIN AND HEADS SMALL -- AS WITH
WHEAT BETWEEN HENGYANG AND CH'ANGSHA. (COMMENT: MAY
BE DUE TO INSUFFICIENT FERTILIZER OR WATER, BUT WHEAT
IS IN IRRIGATED FIELDS AND SHOULD HAVE BEEN WELL
WATERED. SOILS ARE RED AND MAY BE POOR. STRIKING
FACT IS UNIFORMITY OF HEIGHT AND DENSITY, I.E., NO
FIELDS OF SPOTTY OR UNEVEN GROWTH.) WATER: APPEARED
PROGRESSIVELY DRIER AFTER CROSSING INTO SOUTHERN HUPEH.

6. WUHAN TO LUO HE (HONAN). WHEAT: SMALL IRRIGATED
FIELDS NORTH OF WUHAN, BUT PROGRESSIVELY LARGER
FIELDS, ON UPLANDS, PROCEEDING NORTHWARD. WHEAT
PREDOMINANT CROP -- MORE THAN HALF OF ALLL FIELDS OVER
LARGE STRETCHES. SOME HARVESTING (PLANTS APPROXI-
MATELY TWO AND ONE-HALF FEET TALL) BUT MOST NOT QUITE
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READY (STILL GREEN). ALTHOUGH FIELDS OF UNIFORM
HEIGHT AND DENSITY, STILL NOT VERY DENSE AND HEADS
SEEM SMALL. WHEAT IMPROVED CONSIDERABLY APPROACHING
HUPEH-HONAN BORDER; I.E., TALL, GOOD, DENSE STANDS,
BIGGER HEADS THAN SEEN THUS FAR. MOUNTAIN VALLEYS
"FILLED WITH" WHEAT FIELDS WHICH LOOKED GOOD FROM

AFAR. GENERAL IMPRESSION: ENORMOUS EXPANSES OF EXCELLENT WHEAT THROUGHOUT MOST OF SOUTHERN HALF OF HONAN TRAVERSED; ONLY OCCASIONAL RELATIVELY POOR FIELDS WITH UNEVEN GROWTH, THIN STANDS OR SMALL HEADS.

7. RICE: ONLY RECENTLY PLANTED OR BEING TRANSPLANTED IN NORTHERN HUPEH. MANY FARMERS WORKING IN RICE FIELDS. NO TRANSPLANTING SEEN IN SOUTHERN HONAN. BARLEY: SCATTERED BARLEY FIELDS IN SOUTHERN HONAN, MOST LESS THAN TWO FEET HIGH. THIN STALKS, SMALL HEADS, PALE GREEN. GENERALLY NOT OUTSTANDING IN APPEARANCE ALTHOUGH THERE WERE GOOD STANDS. CORN: APPROXIMATELY ONE FOOT HIGH ON FAIRLY DRY FIELDS. MORE AREA PLANTED TO CORN, AND IMPROVED APPEARANCE, AS TRAIN PROGRESSED THROUGH SOUTHERN HONAN. RAPE: SCATTERED FIELDS IN NORTHERN HUPEH; SOME BEING HARVESTED AND SOME NOT QUITE READY. THRESHING NOTED PERIODICALLY. TOBACCO: OCCASIONAL FIELDS IN HONAN.

8. WATER: CONDITION OF UPLAND WHEAT IN NORTHERN HUPEH INDICATED APPARENT SUFFICIENT WATER ALTHOUGH COUNTRYSIDE APPEARED GENERALLY DRY AND INCREASINGLY SO GOING NORTH. WATER LOW IN STREAMS, SOILS DRIER BUT TERRAIN ROUGHER; LESS LAND UNDER CULTIVATION (HUPEH-HONAN BORDER AREA). IRRIGATED FIELDS APPEARED TO HAVE PLENTIFUL WATER SUPPLY; NON-IRRIGATED FIELDS APPEAR TO HAVE BEEN SUBJECTED TO DRY CONDITIONS ALTHOUGH CROPS ON THEM APPEAR GOOD TO EXCELLENT.

9. CONCLUSION: DROUGHT APPEARS TO HAVE INHIBITED LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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TILLERING, WEAKENED STALKS AND REDUCED HEAD SIZE -- IN HUNAN IN PARTICULAR -- BUT INCREASED PRECIPITATION IN MAY RESULTED IN IMPROVED CONDITION OF WINTER WHEAT. YIELDS WILL BE REDUCED IN SOME AREAS (AS HUNAN AND SOUTHERN HUPEH), BUT SHOULD BE GOOD FURTHER NORTH -- PARADOXICALLY CONSIDERING DROUGHT MORE SERIOUS IN NORTH. RICE CROP SHOULD BE OUTSTANDING. CORN MAY BE OFF TO SLOW START IN MANY AREAS. DEAN

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